

Bethpage groundwater contaminants report expected in summer

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A state and federal probe examining the health effects of exposure to groundwater contaminants from aerospace manufacturing operations in Bethpage and Calverton will not be released until the summer.

The state Department of Health announced the study a year ago, saying the examination was focused on contaminants found at former Navy and Grumman Aerospace manufacturing sites in both communities that are now Superfund sites.

The agency said a month later its public health consultation with the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry was being finalized and would be released in the near future.

But the report is currently being revised to include the latest guidance on "evaluating exposure and risks for the contaminants of concern. "

The agency could not say which contaminants were included. It also would not comment on whether the scope of the investigation had changed or if residents should be concerned by the delay.

"The department's goal is to release a draft for public comment early this summer," a Department of Health spokeswoman said.

Bethpage and Calverton were home to Navy - and what is now Northrop Grumman - manufacturing operations that later became state Superfund sites because of soil and groundwater contamination dating back decades. Several plumes are emanating from the Bethpage site and contamination has reached and passed the Southern State Parkway nearly 4 miles south.

Recently, the state pressured Northrop Grumman to speed up construction of a treatment well in Bethpage after a concentration of volatile organic chemicals showed up at a monitoring well a mile from the site at concentrations above 14,000 parts per billion, consisting primarily of the carcinogen Trichloroethylene, or TCE. The safe drinking water standard for TCE is 5 parts per billion.

The Department of Environmental Conservation also ordered Northrop Grumman to investigate further after the Bethpage Water District announced a well - offline since 2013 - had recently violated drinking water standards for radium.

"We encourage the state to release its findings as soon as possible," said Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano, who lives in Bethpage and said he got into politics because of groundwater contamination concerns in his hometown.

State Department of Health Public Health Specialist Steven Karpinski announced the study at a 2015 meeting hosted by the Navy to discuss cleanup efforts, saying "toxicologists are looking at data and coming up with estimates of exposure and impacts."

Little else was released about the study. Neither the federal agency nor the Department of Health would say what time period of exposure was being evaluated by contamination data,

which exist back to 1976. DEC said volatile organic chemicals like TCE were part of the evaluation.

Germaine Vazquez, a spokeswoman for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, said the federal organization was providing technical assistance and oversight to the Department of Health. The agency expects to receive the report this month to analyze.

"We hope to release it later this year," Vazquez said.

David Sobolow, a co-chairman on the Navy's restoration advisory board advising on the Bethpage cleanup, was eager to see the study released, saying Bethpage residents have been concerned for years about how the plume and contamination could affect their health.

"Everybody has talked about clusters in Bethpage and yet there is no definitive study," Sobolow said. "It will be interesting to see what they come up with."

Northrop Grumman managed the 6,000-acre facility in Calverton charged with flight testing, refitting and retrofitting of aircraft between 1954 and 1996. In Bethpage, the defense contractor conducted research and development, testing and manufacturing for the Navy from the 1930s to 1996.

The Environmental Protection Agency said as late as 2005 that groundwater contamination and exposures at the Calverton site were under control.